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Sir, sorry we snooped. . . Your friends at CIA

WASHINGTON — A Federal judge has just ruled that the CIA must write a letter of apology to people whose mail they opened in the United States. The Department of Justice has suggested the text of the letter, which turns out to be a formal apology in typical governmental gobbledygook, which in my opinion would not get the CIA off the hook.

I think if the CIA really wants to show it's sorry for reading the mail of Americans, it should make each letter a personal one, which would show that the Central Intelligence Agency has a heart.

Here are a few suggestions of the type of letters of apology Adm. Stansfield Turner, the head of the CIA, would send out to people whose privacy had been violated.

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Dear Mr. MacComber,

You can't imagine how sorry all of us in the CIA are for reading your mail during the past 14 years. It was an oversight which I assure you won't happen again.

I regret your Aunt Tilly in Dublin still has pains in her back. Our medical team suggests she use a hot water bottle at night to relieve the agony. Also, I think your son is out of line

ART BUCHWALD

when he says he wants to stay in Paris to continue his education. Our agents in Paris report that he is not going to school but is spending all of his time at cafes.

The letter you received from the Carlsons in Venice telling you what a wonderful time they were having was slightly exaggerated. Carlson came down with dysentery and Mrs. Carlson's photographs of St. Mark's Square were all overexposed.

We'll be happy to send you information on any other letters we read, if you want us to. I hope it will make up in a small way for what we now consider an illegal undercover program.

Sincerely Yours,
Adm. Stansfield Turner

□

Dear Ms. Halifax,

As you know, the CIA was involved in a mail-reading program, and for reasons which no one here can explain all your letters from abroad were opened and scrutinized. You can't imagine how upset we are about this. Some overzealous employee, who will have to remain nameless for security reasons, was responsible. After going through his report on your mail, all I can say is that you have beautiful handwriting and I wish my children could write as well.

Your love letters to Mr. Cesar Randini in Rome were masterpieces and should be published in a book. The CIA would do it, but we recently went out of the book publishing business.

We're sorry that Mr. Randini broke off the relationship by marrying Signora Carmelita Verdi of 14 Via Condotti, but you must take my word for it that Mr. Randini is not a one-woman man. All the time he was calling "his little artichoke" he was spending his evenings at Signora Verdi's apartment, sometimes leaving as late as four in the morning. You are

Dear Mrs. Starbuckle,

I am obligated by the Federal courts to inform you that we have been reading your mail and that of your husband, whose trips to London, Brussels and Antwerp on business have taken him out of the country six times a year.

I know you are suspicious that some of these trips are not all concerned with business. I can assure you that as far as Brussels and Antwerp are concerned, your husband has been conducting commerce for his company.

We are unable to find out exactly what business he has in London, unless his meetings with Lady Mathilda MacIntosh of 1234 Cadogan Square have to do with steel exporting. Our records show Lady MacIntosh has never been in the steel business, nor was the late Sir Harold MacIntosh, who was 30 years his wife's senior.

Unfortunately, the bug we planted in the Cadogan Square flat has always been drowned out by Frank Sinatra music whenever your husband has been there. Since we can no longer, by law, follow this case, I might suggest you inquire about a London private detective who could investigate what Mr. Starbuckle really does in London.

In putting forth this suggestion, it is our sincere hope that you will forgive the CIA for reading your mail. And if anything good comes of our intelligence about Mr. Starbuckle's stopovers in London, we hope you will think kindly of the CIA in the future.

Sincerely,
Adm. Stansfield Turner